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Rep. Sanfelippo recommends review of public lands agency

MADISON, Wis. – State Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-New Berlin, would like to offer his sincere appreciation to Tia Nelson, who is resigning as executive secretary of the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands after serving the position for more than a decade.

Since Nelson is leaving, Sanfelippo believes now is an ideal time for the state Legislature to explore a full review of the agency to see if its duties are redundant and could be absorbed by other state departments.

An Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Forestry in 2004 recommended the BCPL should divest itself of timberland property and have the state Department of Natural Resources manage the parcels as it has done in prior years.

Former state Rep. Donald Friske, who served on the task force, suggested the DNR is much more cost effective at managing land and should be in charge. "This is a turf battle that needs to be settled, permanently," Friske said.

Sanfelippo also says the Legislature should look into the possibility of the State of Wisconsin Investment Board administering the trust funds and loan programs currently managed by the BCPL. The trust funds provide aid for public school libraries and the loans are awarded to municipalities and school districts.

"The BCPL has been operating above and beyond its constitutional parameters for years by purchasing land and getting into the timber business," Sanfelippo said. "We should closely analyze all functions of the BCPL to see if they could be absorbed by other state agencies to get the best deal for taxpayers."

Even if changes are made to the BCPL, the Wisconsin Constitution requires the state agency to remain in charge of selling school and university lands. The BCPL, which is funded entirely by program revenue from investment earnings, has an [annual budget](#) of about \$1.6 million.

"We would be better off putting that \$1.6 million budget into schools rather than into the agency's overhead," Sanfelippo said.

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